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TAGS: PREL PARM IS EG

SUBJECT: GAZA BORDER UPDATE: FIRST STAGE OF WALL  
COMPLETED, HUMANITARIAN AID, SMUGGLING

REF: A. CAIRO 488

1B. CAIRO 467

1C. CAIRO 452 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary: Egyptian security sources told us March 17 that on March 16 Egypt completed the first phase of the Gaza border wall between the Mediterranean coast and Rafah. Building began March 17 on the second phase of the wall from Rafah to Kerem Shalom. Egypt facilitated humanitarian shipments into Gaza March 17. Our sources assess there is a possibility of another Palestinian breakout over the border sometime in the future. The sources said Egypt has seized about 1.5 tons of TNT since the January breakout, and has detected no evidence of sea smuggling recently. End summary.

12. (S) The first phase of the wall begins 3.5 km south of the Mediterranean coast and stretches 8.5 kms southward to the Rafah terminal. On March 17, the GOE began the second phase of the wall which will stretch from Rafah to the Kerem Shalom crossing. The 3.5 meter high, 1.5 meter wide stone wall is reinforced in some spots by large metal anti-vehicle boxes packed with stones and scrap metal.

13. (S) On March 18, Egyptian security sources told us that the GOE facilitated shipments of 70 tons of sugar and 270 tons of flour through Kerem Shalom into Gaza on March 17. The sources told us that approximately 200 Palestinian women demonstrated March 17 on the Gaza side of the Rafah terminal to protest the GOE's detention of Palestinian men in Egypt. The sources explained that Egypt has detained a "few hundred" Palestinians who were caught with explosives in the northern Sinai after the January breakout. The sources said that President Mubarak has ordered Egyptian Border Guard Forces and Civilian Security Forces to use only rubber bullets and tear gas, not lethal force, in the event of another border breach. They said there is a clear possibility that Palestinians will again storm the border at some point in the future, and if they do so, the GOE probably will not be able to stop them.

14. (S) Our interlocutors also told us that Egypt has seized about 1.5 tons of TNT since the January border breach, and that tunneling has increased since the breakout. They said they have found no evidence of sea smuggling recently. They also said there is no evidence of MANPADS smuggling.

15. (S) The sources said that on March 30, a senior Egyptian General will travel to Tel Aviv for a quarterly liaison meeting with his Israeli counterpart. Among other issues, the two sides will discuss joint efforts, ongoing since January, to find the remains of an Israeli pilot who was shot down in the Gulf of Suez approximately 40 years ago.

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